When Top Management Leadership Matters: Insights From Artistic Interventions

Berthoin Antal, Ariane; Debucquet, Gervaise; Frémeaux, Sandrine

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Berthoin Antal, A., Debucquet, G., & Frémeaux, S. (2019). When Top Management Leadership Matters: Insights From Artistic Interventions. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *28*(4), 441-457. https://doi.org/10.1177/1056492617726393

Berthoin Antal, Ariane; Debucquet, Gervaise; Frémeaux, Sandrine

When Top Management Leadership Matters: Insights From Artistic Interventions

Journal of Management Inquiry

When Top Management Leadership Matters: Insights From Artistic Interventions

Journal of Management Inquiry
2019, Vol. 28(4) 441–457

DOI: 10.1177/1056492617726393
journals.sagepub.com/home/jmi
SAGE

Ariane Berthoin Antal[1], Gervaise Debucquet[2], and Sandrine Frémeaux[2]

Abstract

This article addresses how top management leadership behaviors matter in innovative interventions in organizations. A comparison of six cases of artistic interventions in four countries reveals that lack of visible top management support and sense-making orientation during and after the process resulted in little added value for the organization in three cases. Three other cases show various ways in which top management can legitimize such experimentation, from which more positive outcomes flowed at the individual and collective levels. The implications are counterintuitive because top management faces two sets of tensions in innovative processes: presence/absence and providing orientation/being open to learning. The article suggests ways that top managers can address these tensions, including by engaging in constellations of distributed leadership, for which this article proposes a new definition.

Keywords

leadership, organizational learning, innovation, artistic interventions, sensemaking

Respondents' observations during field research sometimes offer a puzzle that plants the seed for an article. In the course of our 7-year research program studying artistic interventions in organizations, we were struck that employees mentioned two kinds of outcomes they did not expect: Some reported that the experience generated far more value at the individual and collective level than they imagined possible at the outset. For example, a Swedish human resource manager reported enthusiastically that the company had been working on an issue for several years without

> real progress . . . until the artistic intervention opened the discussion in such a new way that the employees in the group discovered their shared desire to help others in society . . . and they developed a prototype project together six months before the deadline.

By contrast, other respondents expressed frustration and disappointment that, although they had benefitted personally, the potential for achieving collective benefits had not been realized in the organization. A Spanish engineer, for example, observed,

> The interaction helped me discover a broader sense of what is possible, but I was the only person who really saw all the benefits of the project. Years later, we have begun to develop social-collaborative projects, very much based on the idea I learned from the artist . . . we could have done it so much earlier!

We were intrigued to notice that the disappointed participants often mentioned the lack of visible support from top management—a factor that the literature on artistic interventions in organizations did not lead us to expect. Of course, the outcomes of any innovative process in an organization are affected by many factors, but we decided to take the respondents seriously and zoom in on this particular factor to ask the following question: What was top management doing in the cases that the participants believed generated value at the individual and collective level but was lacking in those that were disappointing?

The question is far from trivial because leading international scholars are encouraging top managers to work with the arts to address issues in their organizations and in society at large, and increasing numbers of them are trying to do so (Adler, 2006, 2011, 2015; Darsø, 2004, 2016; Ladkin, 2008, 2010) For example, Adler has experimented with bringing various artistic processes into corporate strategy and organizational life, not only inspiring top managers from around the world but actually enabling them to see realities in fresh

[1]WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Germany
[2]Audencia Business School, Nantes, France

Corresponding Author:
Ariane Berthoin Antal, WZB Berlin Social Science Center, Reichpietschufer 50, 10785 Berlin, Germany.
Email: ariane.berthoin.antal@wzb.eu

ways so that they discover how to embrace creative solutions and transform ugliness into beauty (Adler, 2011, 2015).

The emerging body of literature on arts in business may well be contributing to encouraging top managers to step out into this unknown territory, but it does not yet answer the question of what they can do to increase the likelihood that the organization will benefit from the process. Empirical studies in this area generally focus on the interaction between the artists and the employees. To the extent that the literature refers to top managers, it tends to be limited to the first step, namely, the decision to do something as unconventional as to bring in artists. Looking at this particular step is important because, as Zambrell (2016) points out, it takes courage to try out such an innovative process whose outcome cannot be precisely defined at the outset. However, attending only to the first step is not enough. The lack of attention to top managers in artistic interventions creates the misleading impression that the responsibility for generating value from these activities lies entirely with the artists. While artists are clearly key players in engaging employees to try out new approaches and challenge existing mindsets, "it is not just art's task" to generate value-added in an organization (Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2014).

The lack of attention to the role of top managers in artistic interventions is partially due to the special interest in the role of artists, because they are unusual actors in organizational processes. It may also be partially due to the turn away in leadership scholarship from the tradition of theories that implicitly expected leaders to take on heroic proportions for the transformation of social contexts (Fletcher & Käufer, 2003; Mintzberg, 2010; Uhl-Bien, 2006). However, this theoretical turn risks overlooking important phenomena in the workplace. Whereas there is a "limited demand" for leadership in the normal running of an organization (Blom & Alvesson, 2014, p. 350), employees value active leadership in new situations, especially when leaders are defined as people who act in ways that influence emergent and interactive dynamics (Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Such dynamics are at play in artistic interventions that offer employees a "powerful space for challenge, reflection and instruction" (Mangham, 2001, p. 296) in which they may develop new skills and perspectives on their work and its meaning. Given that the decision to bring artistic interventions into organizations is taken by leaders in top management positions, theory building could benefit from an examination of what these actors actually do subsequently to enable employees to benefit individually and collectively from the experience.

This article proceeds in a somewhat unorthodox manner to permit the reader to get a feeling for the still unusual phenomenon of artistic interventions in organizations before considering the theoretical implications. Instead of starting with a literature review, the reader first learns about artistic interventions through summaries of six cases in organizations in four European countries. Whereas most publications on artistic interventions tend not to address problematic experiences, here we first look at three exemplars of cases that the participants felt were disappointing and where they mentioned top management leadership as contributing to the problem. Then we offer three illustrative cases which the participants felt were generative, and we examine the role of top managers in the process. By generative cases, we mean those in which participants reported experiencing collective outcomes, often beyond what they believe they would have achieved without the artistic intervention. By disappointing cases, we mean those in which participants felt more could have been achieved for the organization, beyond the benefits they may have reaped at the individual level.

Our intention with these cases is to understand how top managers may support or unwittingly impede artistic interventions from fulfilling their potential for stimulating collective-level values-added[1] in addition to individual benefits. The unorthodox structure continues by bringing strands of leadership literature into the "Discussion" section of the article. By connecting the insights from the generative and disappointing cases to the literature at this point, we enrich theory building relating to top management leadership in unconventional organizational processes and similar "complex and unfolding interventions" (Ling, 2012).

Artistic Interventions in Organizations: Brief Introduction

Artistic interventions in organizations—sometimes also referred to as Arts-Based Initiatives (Schiuma, 2011)—bring "people, products or practices from the world of art into non-arts-based organisations" to stimulate learning (Berthoin Antal, 2009, p. 4). Research has documented that they can take many forms. They may last just a few hours, days, or weeks, and some extend over months and even years. They can include all kinds of art (e.g., theater, photography, dance, textile arts, creative writing, to name just a few), and they differ in the degree of employee involvement. For example, employees may participate in theater exercises and experiment with different behaviors, or they may watch actors perform scenes designed to stimulate individual and collective reflection and discussion about alternatives.

An artistic intervention may be initiated for similar reasons as other kinds of organizational or human resource development process, such as to stimulate innovative capabilities (Raviola & Schnugg, 2016) and to address tensions in the organization (Jahnke, 2016; Styhre & Fröberg, 2016). By contrast, sometimes the decision is triggered not by an organizational issue but rather by curiosity to discover what can be learned from interacting with and being observed by artists (e.g., Berthoin Antal, 2016; Strauß, 2012). The two primary types of roles artists play in artistic interventions are performing for employees to illustrate problematic and/or

desired situations (e.g., Clark & Mangham, 2004) and engaging employees in arts-based exercises (e.g., Brattström, 2016; Pässilä & Oikarinen, 2014) to experiment and move out of their comfort zone (Eriksson, 2009). Artistic interventions are primarily about the process of engaging, but in some cases, the artists also create artworks inspired by their interaction with the space, members, and/or activity of the organization (e.g., Brellochs & Schrat, 2005).

Research has documented many kinds of values-added that can be generated from artistic interventions at the individual and collective levels, although by definition, none are guaranteed outcomes (e.g., Barry & Meisiek, 2010; Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2016; Darsø, 2004; Schiuma, 2011). For example, the most frequently cited impact in a meta-analysis of empirical studies is seeing more and differently at the individual level (Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2016). At the interpersonal level, respondents report increases in the quantity and quality of communication and improvements in collaborative ways of working (Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2016). At the organizational level, positive effects are mentioned for organizational development processes and for innovation in processes, products, and services; however, managers recognize the multiplicity of factors that affect organizational outcomes, and they are reluctant to attribute changes to a single kind of input (Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2016). Two kinds of level-spanning effects are also documented, namely, artful ways of working (which encompass dealing with the unexpected and being open to the new; adopting artistic formats) and activation to engage (Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2016).

Artistic interventions in organizations differ from mainstream consulting interventions as well as physical interventions like outdoor teambuilding in several significant ways. (a) Unlike traditional consultants, artists do not belong to the business world; their attractiveness lies in the very fact that they represent different values and mindsets than those that characterize business culture. Counterculturally, artists help employees to suspend organizational norms temporarily and to refrain from accepting the imperative of efficiency that has increasingly permeated the organizational sphere. At the point where control is eased, efficiency is not the primary goal, and the outcome is not known, mainstream management practices lose their grip. (b) Whereas mainstream consulting processes focus on the intellect, artistic interventions are aesthetically charged: They engage multiple senses and emotions (Darsø, 2016); artists consider resistance to be a potential resource rather than a problem to be overcome (Brattström, 2016; Ibbotson, 2008). (c) Unlike traditional full-time consultants, whose brief often includes supporting the process of implementing their recommendations (or who seek follow-up contracts to do so), artists return to their world after the intervention, leaving the members of the organization to work through the implications of the new, multifaceted experience. This distinction is all the more important because, as Barrcvay and Meisiek (2010) pointed out, (d) whereas mainstream consulting projects tend to offer the client a sense of clarity and certainty, in artistic interventions, "managerial intent . . . often goes unstated," perhaps because "for art to 'work' its results cannot be pinned down in advance" (p. 1515). These combined distinguishing features of artistic interventions imply that orientation, especially from top managers, is likely to be particularly important for generating collective value in the organization. Employees need to see consistent signals of support for engaging in and making sense of the process, then implementing ideas from the experience.

Case Selection and Methodology

Although almost no research has been conducted specifically on top management's role in artistic interventions, it is possible to elicit insights by re-analyzing existing studies from a fresh angle. We therefore searched through our database of 47 empirical studies that had been designed to find out how artistic interventions had been introduced, run, and experienced in organizations between 2000 and 2014. Given the diversity of the field, we followed the "most different systems design" that Przeworski and Teune (1970) recommended for social inquiry. Such an approach permits comparisons to identify patterns relating to similar outcomes within sets and differences between sets of cases. We found six cases in which (a) there was some indication of the role of top management and (b) there was some assessment of values-added at an individual and/or collective level. Our selection of cases from the available literature on artistic interventions was guided by the intention to compare the role of top managers in what the participants or the researchers studying the case considered to be "disappointing" and "generative" examples to identify features that could help explain the different assessments of the experience. By disappointing, we mean achieving less value than the participants believed was possible, especially at a collective level, and generative refers to adding value at both the individual and the collective level.

In four of these cases, we had collected the data ourselves between 2008 and 2013; two cases are drawn from studies by a doctoral student (Strauß, 2012) and a master student (Weller, 2009) whom one of us accompanied in their projects. The data in all the studies we selected were collected from semistructured interviews with the top managers and/or project managers responsible for the artistic intervention, participating employees, and the artists involved. In each case, the researchers who were responsible for the project transcribed and analyzed their interviews using various thematic coding processes, including NVivo in one case (Strauß, 2012). Although the studies were not originally designed to focus on top management leadership behaviors, the respondents often talked at length about the processes and actors in their organizations, so we were able to identify how top managers had been involved.

The cases selected reflect the wide variety of artistic interventions, including different objectives, time frames, art forms, and artist roles. They come from four of the European countries in which the most artistic interventions have been documented in the literature so far: France, Germany, Spain, and Sweden. All six cases were in private sector companies: three are medium-sized knowledge-based organizations (two consultancies, one publishing house), one nationwide retailer, one large manufacturer with almost 1,000 employees, and one medium-sized media company.

Learning From Disappointing Cases

The three cases that participants and researchers characterized as having disappointing outcomes are a German publishing company, a Spanish media company, and a German manufacturing company. The first entered into the artistic intervention without a particular goal, the second sought the artist's input into innovation, and the third had a problem it had been working on with a consultant and now wanted to address in a new way with artists.

Case 1: German Publishing Company

This artistic intervention was hailed for a while as a "landmark event" in the field (Barry, 2008, p. 35). However, follow-up research revealed much frustration and disappointment among employees and participating artists (Strauß, 2012). Why was this? The beginnings were promising: Top managers of a large German publishing house were curious to see what it could learn when artists proposed to offer them multiple portraits of the organization to reflect upon. In 2005, they opened the doors to 14 international artists for a month. The artists' process of engaging with the company led to the production of an exhibition, accompanied by a catalogue; a website; and a collection of texts published in a reader (Brellochs & Schrat, 2005). Despite these multiple tangible products, 5 years later (2010-2011), even the employees who had participated actively in the project remembered very little about it. When the researcher succeeded in reactivating their memories by posing questions and showing them documentation from the project, they recalled their individual experience but pointed out the frustrating gap between their personal involvement and that of the organization.

For example, two employees had accepted the invitation of an artist to use a camera to film their day and record their thoughts and feelings along the way. The artist created an installation with their material. The employees explained to the researcher years later that the experience of recording themselves had led them to reconsider how and why they worked. They were struck by how stuck they had become in routines. Both consciously decided to make changes in the way they worked, so they felt that their participation in the artistic intervention had offered them a powerful learning opportunity. But they said that their direct managers had shown no interest in the project, so they had pursued it essentially as a private activity. They had no conversations about it with colleagues at work. Therefore, no further effect for the organization emanated from their participation. The respondents in the study felt it was a lost opportunity.

The most frequently mentioned factor contributing to the disappointing outcome was the lack of support from managers at different levels of the organization, which in turn affected the legitimacy of time and energy spent on the project at work. Although at the outset top managers had been curious about what the organization could learn from being portrayed by artists, they did not follow up by communicating actively internally about the project. The head of public relations, who became the project coordinator and an enthusiastic believer in its potential, expressed the effect of the absence of top management support: "I felt increasingly left alone here . . . everything was on my shoulders" (Strauß, 2012, p. 267). The absence of top managers' interest in the process and outcomes meant that although the artistic intervention had been intended as an organization-wide project, it remained an individual rather than a collective experience. Indeed, the artists and the employees who participated said they believed that the organization could have benefited from a collective process of reflection around the process and the resulting artworks.

Case 2: Spanish Media Company

A second case illustrates different negative effects of the lack of top management engagement beyond the initial commitment to try the artistic intervention. The top managers of the Spanish media company accepted the proposal of an intermediary organization (that had been created by a consultancy they knew well) to work with an artist to develop new product ideas. They then delegated the project to an engineer. At first, he was not particularly enthusiastic about adding this new assignment to his workload but over time, he became a strong advocate for the potential of artistic interventions in organizations (e.g., speaking at a conference in Brussels, 2009).

During the project, the engineer was the artist's sole interlocutor. They decided to meet outside the company to develop their ideas. During their walks in the city of Bilbao, the artist heard some local songs called *Bilbainadas* and learned from the engineer that the tradition was dying out. The artist proposed that they try to revive it with the young generation, so over several months, they found a cultural center, a school, and musicians willing to work with young people to compose and perform new songs. Then they developed a technique to upload them onto a platform for distribution by the media company. The project generated new music products for the company and a new approach to developing content. Furthermore, it significantly expanded the organization's contacts into the community.

Looking back, the engineer said that the top managers—and therefore most of his colleagues—

> saw it as an uninteresting project but, anyway, I managed to get permission to spend as much time as I needed. I transmitted everything to them but I was the only person who really saw all the benefits of the project.

He added that "years later, we have begun to develop social-collaborative projects, very much based on the idea I learned from the artist, and so, in a much indirect way than desired, the company finally got benefit of the interaction." He felt that "the benefits would have been more immediate" if management had showed more interest in and support for the project at the time, enabling more people to engage with the artist (Berthoin Antal, 2013b, p. 112).

Case 3: German Manufacturing Company

Just how important and difficult it is to follow up on the learning from an artistic intervention is illustrated by the experience of a medium-sized German manufacturing company. For the first time in its history, the company had recently experienced strikes. A consultant had been working with managers on the severe leadership and communication problems they had diagnosed in the company. After participating in an artistic intervention designed for top managers, the CEO invited a visual performance artist team to work with his top 60 managers to address the issue in a new way.

The artist designed a three-part process of visual expression by working with a graffiti artist. The first step was to introduce the managers to graffiti as an expressive art form. The idea was to signal to them that they might need to attune themselves to nontraditional modes of expression from employees in their organization. In the second step, the managers experimented with visualizing their view of the mood in the organization with spray paint, and illustrating their view of the company's current and desirable leadership style as street art on large surfaces. The third step entailed presenting their pieces to the public and explaining their ideas in words. The managers left the artistic intervention with a strong sense of having gained important insights into the leadership problems. They returned to work inspired to implement changes in their communication practices with employees.

However, several months later the situation had not improved enough. So the organizational consultant accompanying the project recommended bringing the artists into the plants to work directly with the employees. The CEO agreed to invest time and money in additional work with the artist, thereby adding a bottom-up approach to the initial top-down learning process. The employees worked with the artists to visualize their experience of current leadership in the organization on large panels with spray paint, along with their image of desired leadership relations. They then presented their graffiti art pieces to the managers. The combination of steps worked for some teams of managers with their employees, but some managers were deeply disturbed by the strong images depicting the negative experiences of their leadership styles that their employees created. Essentially, the images reflected the problems that were already known in the working climate surveys, but the art-based format had a much stronger emotional impact on the viewers than the percentage points in the documents. Some managers accused the consultant of having led them into a trap and insisted on the suspension of his contract with the company. The CEO at this point felt that he had "invested enough in the process and it was time for people to get back to work". Unfortunately, this decision eliminated the support the managers and employees so badly needed to follow up and improve their leadership relations.

Table 1 presents the three disappointing cases.

Table 1. Disappointing Cases.

Case	Context
1. German publishing house	• Initiator: artists offer opportunity to company • Stand-alone project • Objective: Reflect the organization in multiple "portraits" • Role of artists: Create portraits, some of the artists designed projects with voluntary contributions from employees • Artistic output: Artworks were exhibited in a gallery
2. Spanish media company	• Initiator: intermediary organization created by a consulting company • Stand-alone project • Objective: develop new product ideas • Role of artist: help develop ideas (and found local partners to realize them) • Artistic output: None was envisaged at the outset, but songs were uploaded on an experimental platform hosted by the media company
3. German manufacturing company	• Initiator: CEO seeks out artist • Projected embedded in ongoing organization development work with a consultant • Objective: find an innovative way to address problem of strikes at the company • Role of artist: Artist team using graffiti art helped managers and employees to visualize current experience and future vision of leadership • Artistic output: not by artists, but employees created large graffiti images

Learning From Generative Cases

Keeping the problematic cases in mind as a backdrop, it is instructive to turn now to several cases that the participants and researchers believed were generative not only at the individual but also at the collective level. What kind of leadership did top management exercise there, and when? The examples come from a Swedish engineering consultancy, a German retail chain, and a French strategic consultancy. The first company entered into the project in the hopes of finding new ways of addressing a perennial retention problem it was facing, the second wanted to enrich its apprenticeship program, and the third was curious about what might come from the meeting of two worlds.

Case 4: Swedish Engineering Consultancy

The CEO of a medium-sized Swedish engineering consultancy surprised his top managers when he proposed bringing an artist into the company to work with them over a period of 18 months. Consultants spend 80% to 90% of their time in client organizations, so it is hard for them to develop a sense of identity with their employer and they are easily tempted to accept offers to join the client company. The company had tried numerous approaches in the past, ranging from financial incentives to social events, but the retention problem remained. The CEO felt it was time to try something different and he was intrigued when he heard about the possibility of participating in a European project to build bridges between arts, sciences, and technology (http://www.kiics.eu/en/).

The senior sales manager's first response was "weird thing! How can it work?" His curiosity overcame his skepticism, and he became an active member of the project group that included some members of the management team and employees from different parts of the organization. The CEO was not a member of the project group because the artist sensed that his drive to find a solution would override the need to start with an open-ended exploration and his presence might silence some employees. However, he was visibly committed to the project: He met regularly with the artist and the coordinator from the intermediary organization (TILLT) that had introduced the idea of an artistic intervention to the company to discuss the process; he showed interest by engaging in conversations with members of the project team and by referring to the project in organizational events.

The artist surprised the participating employees by giving them writing exercises at the beginning of each meeting, then inviting them to share their thoughts and feelings. She explained, "I made up a strategy to be a 'brake,' to tell them to slow down and let me take responsibility for the results." The participants learned that they first had to interrupt their professional approach to problem solving and suspend their project management skills to enable themselves to widen the territory from which new ideas could emerge.

Through the artist-led exercises of reflection, writing, and talking, the participants discovered that they shared a desire to give to society. They therefore developed a prototype process for identifying projects in the community to which they could collectively contribute their skills. Paradoxically, slowing the group down at the outset actually permitted it to speed up the overall process. They experimented with a pilot project before the end of the first year to be able to use the final 6 months to expand the approach to other parts of the organization and with new external partners. The outcome was not only an unusual approach to increasing retention, it also turned out to be an interesting recruitment vehicle because students from engineering and business schools in the city wanted to become involved. What meant even more to the participants than the benefit to the organization was the fact that they had found new ways to contribute to society together.

Case 5: German Retailer

A large German retail company has shown a deep-seated commitment to learning with the arts ever since the company was founded (Chodzinski, 2007). This mindset filtered down throughout the organization because, as a regional director explained, managers at all levels have had "positive experiences with art helping us to address issues that we care about" (Weller, 2009, p. 67, our translation). One of the founders borrowed an image from the artist Josef Beuys to describe the company as a "human sculpture" that employees contribute to shaping (Chodzinski, 2007, p. 265). Such a conception of organizing entails a relatively flat structure and a culture of open, dialogical communication.

To prepare the youngest members of the organization to engage in this style of communication, top managers decided to add an artistic intervention to the apprenticeship training program in the form of an 8-day theater-based workshop. The days were distributed over time to avoid isolating the theater-based learning as an "event" (Weller, 2009, p. 67). Managers reported observing that their apprentices returned to work with greater self-confidence, which showed in their willingness to engage customers in conversations, and with more initiative to introduce their own ideas. A key element of the program is the time dedicated to follow-up conversations about the experience.

Support for the theater program from the very top of the company was visible throughout the process because the steering group includes not only the head of human resource development but also the wife of the cofounder. Managers across the organization attend the performances at the end of each training period. Former participants who have been promoted into management positions actively support the program.

Despite the fact that the artistic intervention had been running for more than a decade in this company at the time the

study was conducted, respondents reported that it had not become a predictable routine. The director of human resource development stressed, "We have learned that the essence of art entails finding one's own rules of the game. For every project, for every group, for every location" (Weller, 2009, p. 71, our translation). There are numerous other artistic interventions in the company, albeit none as long as this investment in the development of apprentices.

Case 6: French Strategy Consultancy

Like the Swedish engineering consultancy in Case 4, the medium-sized French strategy consulting company is extremely competent in project management. The consultants know how to give their clients clarity and a sense of certainty from the outset about what will happen, why, and how. It would therefore have been quite natural for the strategy consultant who came up with the idea of an artistic residency intervention to promise his own organization exactly such deliverables.

Instead, this middle manager proposed to the CEO and the management board that they take the opportunity to learn from artists in two directions: the artists could (a) hold up a mirror to the organization by working on their art in the company and (b) open a window onto parts of society to which the consultants do not belong. He admitted he did not know enough to be able to manage the program on his own, so he intended to bring in an external partner from the artworld to work in tandem with him. The CEO and the management board agreed to his proposal, including committing the organization to a four-part residency over 2 years, rather than trying out one artist before deciding on whether or not to continue. The board underscored a willingness to take risks by agreeing to invite young conceptual artists, instead of playing it safe with well-known artists or a more easily accessible form than conceptual art.

In this organization, leadership of the artistic intervention was distributed across a constellation of three key actors. The CEO showed active interest and support for the residency program throughout by attending the opening and closing of each residency, meeting with the artists, and talking about it with external stakeholders. The middle-management-level consultant who had initiated the idea teamed up with an art critic to share the day-to-day leadership responsibilities.

Unlike the artistic interventions in the other cases, in this one, the creation of artworks that could be presented on the art market was a core part of the process. Employees could observe the artists at work and talk with them about their projects. Many employees experienced these conversations as enriching, addressing topics like risk taking and the meaning of work that they did not usually talk about. The conversations appear to have been generative for the organization because during the program a new strapline for the company emerged, and by the end of the program top management formulated a "manifesto" expressing the corporate identity and values in a fresh (and artful) way. The artworks that the company acquired from the artists and displayed in collectively used spaces continue to stimulate conversations among old and new employees and with clients (Bessière, 2013).

Table 2 presents the generative cases.

Table 2. Generative Cases.

1.	Swedish engineering consultancy	• Initiator: intermediary offered CEO an opportunity to work with artist on a company issue • Stand-alone project • Objective: find an innovative way to address problem of employee retention • Role of artist: leads writing exercises and stimulates conversations • Artistic output: none
2.	German retail company	• Initiator: Human Resource Development department • Project embedded in apprentice training program, and in art-friendly organizational culture • Objective: develop presence and communication skills of apprentices • Role of artists: introduce apprentices to theater exercises, help them prepare a play • Artistic output: not by artists but apprentices perform a play for audience (managers, employees, family)
3.	French strategy consultancy	• Initiator: middle manager • Stand-alone project • Objective: create possibility of learning from and with artists • Role of artists: engage with employees and organizational space to create artworks • Artistic output: artworks exhibited onsite (and in galleries)

Discussion

To understand how top management leadership mattered for the disappointing and generative outcomes of the artistic interventions, at the individual and collective level, we have presented six cases of artistic interventions in which top management exercised its leadership differently in the process. Although all artistic interventions are complex and occur in fluid organizational and environmental contexts so that isolating a single factor as entirely responsible for disappointing or generative outcomes is impossible, the cases show that top managers are significant not only at the outset, but throughout the process. This selection of examples enabled us to tease out the ways in which top managers may impede or support the generation of values-added from the artistic interventions. Table 3 provides an overview of the cases, summarizing the initial conditions, the leadership

Table 3. Overview of Cases: Context, Leadership, and Outcomes.

Case	Context	Leadership	Outcomes at individual/collective level
1. German publishing house	• Initiator: artists offer opportunity to company • Stand-alone project • Objective: Reflect the organization in multiple "portraits" • Role of artists: Create portraits, some of the artists designed projects with voluntary contributions from employees • Artistic output: Artworks were exhibited in a gallery	• Top management intrigued by the idea and invited artists in, but no further presence or support in the process • Head of corporate communication takes on responsibility for communicating and coordinating with the artists • No evidence of other leadership interest or support at other levels	**Disappointing:** At first "star" case in reports; some individual-level benefits, but no evidence of collective outcomes in the organization; later no memory in organization. *Isolation of participating employees*
2. Spanish media company	• Initiator: intermediary organization created by a consulting company • Stand-alone project • Objective: develop new product ideas • Role of artist: help develop ideas (and found local partners to realize them) • Artistic output: None was envisaged at the outset, but songs were uploaded on an experimental platform hosted by the media company	• Top management agreed to accept artist, then delegated the project to an engineer • No evidence of other leadership interest or support at other levels	**Disappointing:** Individual-level outcomes but no collective outcomes. New material and contacts generated, but not capitalized on by the company. *Isolation of project manager*
3. German manufacturing company	• Initiator: CEO seeks out artist • Projected embedded in ongoing OD work with a consultant • Objective: find an innovative way to address problem of strikes at the company • Role of artist: Artist team using graffiti art helped managers and employees to visualize current experience and future vision of leadership • Artistic output: not by artists, but employees created large graffiti images	• CEO introduced the idea and supported it actively, extending the original commitment from a 2-day management event to a program that involved all employees • Top 60 managers initially showed evidence of wanting to learn to improve their leadership communication skills • CEO ended support of the project in response to some managers' complaints about degree/form of criticism in graffiti visualizations presented by employees	**Disappointing:** Initially individual and collective learning stimulated by strong images that energized efforts for change. But courage lost and learning process interrupted after some managers experienced presentations of graffiti visuals by employees as too harsh. *Isolation of all participants*
4. Swedish engineering consultancy	• Initiator: intermediary offered top management and opportunity to work with artist on a company issue • Stand-alone project • Objective: find an innovative way to address problem of employee retention • Role of artist: leads writing exercises and stimulates conversations • Artistic output: none	• CEO visibly supportive throughout process. Not directly involved in project group but met regularly with artist, and talked about the project internally and externally • Active participation of several senior managers alongside other employees (participated in writing and conversation sessions with artist, talked about project internally and externally, found partners to implement new idea)	**Generative:** After the artist slowed down the process, a meaningful prototype approach emerged faster than expected. Individual learning and collective benefits inside and outside the organization. *Participation expanded beyond project group*
5. German retail company	• Initiator: Human Resource Development department • Project embedded in apprentice training program, and in art-friendly organizational culture • Objective: develop presence and communication skills of apprentices • Role of artists: introduce apprentices to theater exercises, help them prepare a play • Artistic output: not by artists but apprentices perform a play for audience (managers, employees, family)	• Longstanding and visible support from top management for working with the arts in the organization and specifically for the intervention under study • Wife of CEO in the management group for the project • Middle managers support their apprentices participating in the intervention (talk with them about the learning experience, attend the final performance)	**Generative:** Workshops effectively develop apprentices' skills and shared values. Individual and collective benefits. *Participation of employees at all levels of organization*
6. French strategy consultancy	• Initiator: middle manager • Stand-alone project • Objective: create possibility of learning from and with artists • Role of artists: engage with employees and organizational space to create artworks • Artistic output: artworks exhibited onsite (and in galleries)	• Middle manager led the project after gaining support from the management board • Visible support of CEO throughout process: met with artists, attended events, talked about the project internally and externally	**Generative:** Meaningful conversations with artists at work, emergence of new corporate identity statement. Individual and collective benefits. *Extension of participation in conversations to external stakeholders and newcomers years later still triggered by memorable artworks*

behavior observed, and the outcomes at the individual and collective level. The comparative overview across the diverse cases shows that top management leadership matters: A disappointing outcome is associated with the absence of top management leadership, and a generative outcome involves various leadership activities at the top and other levels of the organization throughout the process.

These cases reveal that how top managers position, engage in, follow up on internally, and communicate externally about artistic interventions are significant factors for the generation of value from the interaction between the world of the arts and the world of the organization. Top managers are particularly significant in making the initial formal organizational commitment to participate in an artistic

intervention. Then employees need to see top managers legitimizing participating in an artistic intervention, supporting reflection on the experience together, and following up on the learning process

The analysis of the three disappointing cases leads us to observe that it is difficult to benefit from artistic interventions in the absence of top management support throughout the process, especially to provide the legitimacy for challenging engrained behavioral norms and mindsets. If top managers do not show an interest in the process and the outcome of the artistic intervention, managers at other levels are less likely to support it. Various kinds of isolation result from this lack of attention: The participating employees feel isolated, the project manager feels isolated, and in some cases, both employees and project managers may feel isolated. Even if some employees engage and benefit from the experience personally, little value is added for the organization.

The three generative cases illustrate that support from top managers can take various forms: making the decision to initiate an artistic intervention; participating in the intervention, communicating about it internally and externally; showing an interest in learning from the intervention; stimulating reflection about the process and its outcomes; enabling the movement of ideas into action.

The implications of these findings are counterintuitive, however. One could be tempted to suggest that to maximize the individual and collective benefits from the project, top managers should participate actively throughout the process and communicate clearly about the value of the artistic intervention, the work it entails, and the results that emerge from it. But reality is more complex. While the visible support for artistic interventions is essential, the presence of top management in experimental learning situations with the artist may restrict freedom of expression and behavior (Rae, 2011). Therefore, a top manager who wants to show support faces two different kinds of tensions. (a) Too much presence may inhibit employees from expressing themselves freely, while too great an abstention may dissuade employees from participating in an unusual initiative that has not received sufficient legitimacy. (b) Too little orientation confuses employees when they need to make sense of the unusual approach they are undertaking, while too much clarity undermines the essence of learning from stepping out into the unknown territory that an artistic intervention opens. Presence/absence and guiding/learning are two inherent tensions that top managers inevitably face when seeking to enhance the capacity of innovative processes like artistic interventions to realize the potential benefits at the individual and collective level. Our three generative cases illustrate several ways in which top managers can handle these tensions.

Legitimizing, Ceding, and Suspending

The intention of artistic interventions is to open time and space for people to experiment with ways of thinking and doing things that are not part of the repertoire in the organization. A significant top management role in introducing and supporting artistic interventions is therefore the legitimization of behavior that deviates from established cultural norms of the organization. For employees, participating in unusual behavior to try out new things and develop new ideas may be easier when top management is not part of the group. In the Swedish consultancy case, the writing exercise with which the artist started each meeting imposed a slowing down in a time-driven organizational culture. The participants agreed that it was easier to do this without the CEO in the room, although it mattered greatly to them that they had his support for the process they were engaging in. All three generative cases showed that top managers can exercise leadership by actively communicating support for experimentation while ceding control to the employees and the artist in the "interspace" that the artistic intervention opens in the organizational structure and culture (Berthoin Antal & Strauß, 2016, p. 39). The interspace permits a temporary suspension of hierarchical power to make room for experimenting, discovering, and learning.

Distributing

Another pattern in the three generative cases is that leadership for the artistic intervention is exercised by top managers in conjunction with other managers at different levels of the organization, rather than located in one place. Such leadership constellations appear to be conducive to enabling participants to generate values-added in and from artistic interventions in their organizations because they permit the co-creation of space for learning by top management and employees. The constellation also helps stabilize organizational commitment to the innovative approach during difficult phases of the process.

The most extensive distribution of leadership in the generative cases is illustrated in the German retailer, where the top management has initiated and supported many types of artistic interventions in which subsequent generations of managers have participated, building a strong core of shared values. The apparent paradox of presence and absence of top management support in artistic interventions is thereby resolved because the distribution constellation extends leadership throughout the organization. However, not all top managers are comfortable sharing leadership this way, as a study of 12 cases of artistic interventions in the United Kingdom found:

> Many CEO's found the process challenging because they had to devolve leadership at moments of uncertainty in the process, and whilst some found this a beneficial learning experience for them and their staff, a couple found it threatening and withdrew. (Robinson & Dix, 2007, p. 26)

Learning

Artistic interventions are usually brought in by top management to stimulate some kind of individual and/or collective learning process in the organization. Although the top managers usually do not include themselves in the target group of learners, several studies suggest that their willingness to learn is actually an important factor (e.g., Darsø, 2004; Eriksson, 2009). In the French consultancy the project leader (in middle management) welcomed the accompaniment of the project by a researcher who stimulated his reflection in each interview over the 2½-year project, and by the end of the project, the top management team expressed its learning from the process in the form of a new corporate identity statement. An analysis of 62 cases of artistic interventions in the Spanish Basque country shows that the top managers are energized by their learning from interacting with the artists (Berthoin, Antal, Nussbaum, & Bitram, 2015). They highlighted many kinds of learning that they did not expect when they responded to the postexperience surveys, such as "realizing that any idea, no matter how unusual it may appear, can be valuable," "discovering that some of my people have qualities that we did not notice in their daily work," "finding that uncertainty and chaos are good breeding grounds for creativity in an organization," "leading a project with different speeds and rhythms for the members of the team," and "discovering how much we can learn from games."

The richness of such learning opportunities for managers was confirmed by a study that used a multistakeholder and mixed method approach to research the effects of intensive leadership programs of three different executive institutes that embed the arts into the curriculum:

> The primary conclusion of this study is that the arts can be a valuable resource for conceptualizing leadership challenges in new ways, which is the hallmark of creative thinking and is based on a set of learning conditions: confronting leader's cognitive traps, emphasizing personal as well as professional dimensions of leadership, embracing leaders' frustration, and fostering teamwork. . . . Leader creativity needs not only stress "out-of-the-box" or new ways of thinking, but can also emphasize emotional awareness, toleration of ambiguity, learning from mistakes, and risk-taking. (Katz-Buonincontro, 2008, pp. 21-22)

Finally, our comparison of six cases shows that top managers can help employees make sense of these tensions by combining presence and absence, as well as by combining a guiding attitude with a learning attitude. The comparison of experiences with disappointing and generative artistic interventions illustrates how top managers exercise their responsibility for legitimizing experimentation in the organization by enabling the opening of spaces in which they cede or suspend leadership. The cases also show that top management leadership consists in generating more leadership among other people in the organization, while continuing to be visibly interested in learning from the artistic intervention both for themselves and for the organization.

Reconnecting to Leadership Literature

With our six cases in mind, we now turn to the literature on leadership and learning to address two interrelated questions: Which theories help elucidate the experiences in the cases, and how can the insights from the cases enrich theory development? There are numerous definitions of leadership, and we use the term to refer to "influencing meanings, norms, feelings, thinking and values, mainly through interpersonal, non-coercive means" (Blom & Alvesson, 2014, p. 344).[2]

Despite decades of research, the connection between leadership and organizational effectiveness remains tenuous (Andersen, 2016). Recent research on transformational leadership has identified components that influence a willingness to engage in innovative processes, including attributive charisma, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation (Mokhber, Wan Ismail, & Vakilbashi, 2015). Imran, Ilyas, and Aslam (2016) have shown that such leadership has significant positive impact on learning by developing knowledge-intensive culture and introducing knowledge management processes. However, it has drawbacks in learning processes: Although transformational leader behavior has been found to have a positive impact on team innovation, it has a negative impact on individual innovation (Li, Mitchell, & Boyle, 2016), and it tends to exclude personal development at work (see also Alvesson & Kärreman, 2016).

As these conceptions of leadership do not adequately explain the individual- and collective-level learning effects in our cases, we looked for literature that addresses the relational dimension of leadership and the notion that leadership entails sense-making and orientation to a sense of purpose (Dinh et al., 2014). Authentic leadership theory establishes a link between the authenticity of the leader and the authenticity of the members of the organization (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Ethical leadership theory pays particular attention to the values of honesty, trust, and integrity, and to the way the leader communicates to set the organization's moral tone (Mayer, Aquino, Greenbaum, & Kuenzi, 2012). Rooted in an analysis of virtues (Hackett & Wang, 2012), servant leadership theory makes a connection between the virtuous behavior of the leader and the well-being of followers (Parris & Peachey, 2013). Finally, spiritual leadership aims to spread the vision and promote attitudes of faith and love that develop a nurturing organizational culture of care (Fry, 2003). These theories fill in gaps left in other strands of leadership literature. However, their emphasis on leaders' influence on others through displays of their values and beliefs "remains curiously one-sided" (Eagly, 2005, p. 460).

Opening the Black Box of Top Managers' Leadership Behavior

The literature on artistic interventions leaves readers essentially in the dark about what top managers do to support generating individual and collective benefits from these processes, a situation reminiscent of what some leadership scholars characterize as the "black box" (Hunt, Boal, & Sorenson, 1990, p. 41). Our research shows that rather than focusing on their own personal interests, the top managers in the generative cases sought to expand the horizons in the workplace and to favor an orientation to collective interests. They did so by combining two leadership stances:

- They generated leadership in a noninstrumental way. They did not delegate the responsibility to avoid taking responsibility themselves (as happened in the disappointing cases). They opted to make space for others to develop themselves by participating in leading a meaningful process. They found a balance between showing sufficient presence while also respecting the need for their absence in experimental processes.
- They provided some orientation while also engaging visibly in a learning journey themselves. This balancing act between providing a sense of direction while being open to learning is a significant challenge many leaders face in complex and uncertain contexts, when employees would like to have a sense of certainty. It is important to employees that top managers recognize this human need and provide some orientation about the purpose and significance of a new venture, while also showing that they are open to discovering new ways of seeing and doing things along the way. The theater director Piers Ibbotson (2008) characterizes this leadership skill as providing "misty vision" (p. 25).

Thus, our cases show that top managers can exercise their responsibility for leadership without controlling information and action. Transformational leadership theories overemphasize the rational and systematic character of leadership processes. By contrast, these new approaches reflect the complex socially embedded character of leadership.

Paradoxically, leadership can also consist of generating and suspending leadership to enable experimentation and learning. Our findings in the context of artistic interventions thereby diverge from the tradition of transformational leadership, which maintains a model of the leader as the central and all-knowing actor (Bass & Bass, 2008). In our generative cases, the process is neither exclusively initiated nor managed by top management leaders, although the participants know that they support it fully and see them engaging at important moments. The top manager activates the leadership and learning capacity of others by balancing presence with absence, and orientation with learning. Our findings and reflections on the importance of top managers' capacity to combine engagement and retreat enrich the literature on distributed leadership, especially relating to unusual learning processes which challenge established norms and beliefs in the organization to stimulate new ideas.

The strands of leadership literature we connect with fall in the postheroic school of thought, which recognizes that the "effectiveness of living systems of relationships does not depend on individual, heroic leaders but rather on leadership practices embedded in a system of interdependencies at different levels within the organization" (Fletcher & Käufer, 2003, p. 21). Scholars have stressed the need to rethink leadership theories and to move away from the heroic model (e.g., Ladkin, 2010; Uhl-Bien, 2006). The notions of shared and distributed leadership had come to mind when we were describing the constellations of top managers and managers at other levels of the organization who worked together to support realizing individual- and collective-level benefits from the artistic intervention. Reviewing the literature revealed that the terms come from different contexts: Shared leadership is used in reference to teams, and distributed leadership comes from the education system (Fitzsimons, Turnbull, & Denyer, 2011). The advantage is that both streams recognize that the exercise of leadership is relational and is not limited to formal roles. However, neither stream addresses the leadership of top managers, probably because they both emerged as a reaction to traditional conceptions of top-down and heroic leadership (Fletcher & Käufer, 2003). Critics of distributed and shared leadership warn that these theories suggest "a minor heroization of peer relations" and that "everybody can do leadership—nobody is supposed to do followership" (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2016, p. 143).

Redefining Distributed Leadership

Instead of coining yet another term to add to the leadership literature, we propose to retain the notion of distributed leadership and draw it into the corporate context while retaining its connection to learning at the individual and collective level that its origins in the educational sector conferred on it. As a recent study highlighted, leaders can encourage distributed leadership and set in motion a learning dynamic by identifying potential leaders, creating leadership opportunities for them, facilitating their role transitions, and providing them with continuous support (Klar, Huggins, Hammons, & Buskey, 2016). We define distributed leadership as a constellation of people exercising leadership for an innovative process and coming from different positions in the organization, often from different levels—including top management. This definition thereby extends the use of the concept from its origins in the educational sector in a group or, more recently, in team contexts (e.g., Gibb, 1954; Mehra, Smith, Dixon, &

Robertson, 2006). It recognizes that distributed leadership may be exercised both in formal and informal roles (Harris & Spillane, 2008) and that it is not incompatible with vertical leadership (Pearce & Sims, 2002). Furthermore, while the constellation of distributed leadership tends to be emergent rather than assigned (Bolden, 2011), the leaders are definitely identifiable and recognized as such by others for their role in the innovative process, even if they have no other formal leadership responsibility in the organization.

Our study reveals that the constellation of distributed leadership in innovative processes like artistic interventions can be expanded beyond the top management "sponsor" and midlevel "champion" identified in earlier studies (Berthoin Antal, 1992). In the French strategic consulting company case, the project champion at middle management level actively sought the visible sponsorship of the CEO to ensure the necessary legitimation of the artistic intervention project in the organization. In addition, he created a tandem with a partner from the arts because he recognized that he did not know enough about the world of the arts to handle the process. Together, they bridged between the different logics and values of the two worlds during the artistic intervention process. By contrast, the disappointing cases neither had a solid sponsor-champion constellation, nor a tandem between an organizational insider and a person with expertise and credibility from the world of the arts to co-lead the process. They had a "place in-between that is much more difficult to hold" (Strauß, 2012, p. 268). Our study therefore suggests that when innovation processes entail learning by drawing on different cultural contexts and logics, the champion role should be shared in a tandem that reflects and values these differences.

Conclusion

So how and when does leadership from top management matter in artistic interventions in organizations or similar unusual/disruptive initiatives that challenge established organizational norms and mindsets? And how can the findings contribute to theory building on leadership in other kinds of innovative initiatives? The comparison of the six very different cases, half of which had disappointing outcomes and half of which were generative, shows that top management is indeed among the important factors in innovative processes like artistic interventions. The cases show that although it is possible for some individuals to benefit from an artistic intervention despite lack of top management leadership providing orientation and support, collectively experienced value-added is unlikely to happen without such leadership. The comparison between the generative and the disappointing cases also shows the significance of top management leadership throughout the process, not just at the outset to make the decision to bring in an artistic intervention. Top managers make a difference by showing an active interest and support throughout the process in three ways: (a) They help legitimize the time invested at work in the experimental interaction with the arts, (b) they contribute to collective sense-making about the experience in the organizational setting, and (c) they increase the likelihood that the ideas that are developed during the artistic intervention are followed up on afterward so that individual- and collective-level benefits can be realized.

A distinguishing feature of the leadership in cases with generative outcomes is the emergence of constellations of distributed leadership involving different levels in the organization. These constellations are distinct from delegated leadership in at least two ways: (a) Top managers continue to sponsor the activity by exhibiting interest and support, rather than putting the project aside after assigning it to a leader lower down in the organization, and (b) the leader who champions the project on the ground tends to be self-nominated and may initiate the idea, rather than receiving the assignment top-down. By definition, the constellations of distributed leadership differ from the transformational school of heroic leaders because the actors realize that they cannot work alone. They know that they need each other in the innovative process. Their role is to open a space for experimentation rather than to get the employees to reach a specific and predetermined transformational target. Our contribution thereby extends beyond the field of artistic interventions. It revises the notion of constellations of distributed leadership, bringing it from the educational sphere into the corporate context, and expanding the constellation to include external actors as co-learners and co-leaders.

Research Agenda

This analysis benefitted from re-reading the rich qualitative material available in existing studies about what happens in artistic interventions, none of which had been specifically designed to collect data about the top management leadership behavior and its effects. We found sufficient evidence in this material about how top managers make a difference to warrant designing future studies specifically to examine the distribution of roles and activities of leadership throughout the process. Furthermore, future studies should explicitly include the leadership roles and activities that the artists take on, and explore how these are connected to those played by the members of the organization. Such research should recognize that artistic interventions are complex and unfolding, so it should be undertaken in real time and designed with a longitudinal approach extending several months and even years beyond the intervention to determine which factors affect the sustainability of the effects of the artistic intervention (see, for example, Ling, 2012).

Possibly the most fruitful, but most difficult, research challenge ahead in this area is to compare artistic interventions

with other kinds of interventions in organizations. Ideally, scholars would find some organizations undertaking several kinds of interventions, including mainstream organizational development approaches and those using outdoor exercises as well as artistic interventions. They should observe the leadership exercised by top managers, managers at other levels of the organization, external consultants and/or artists in their interactions with employees before, during, and after the experiences. Such empirical research is needed to understand the possibilities and limitations of artistic interventions as a relatively new addition to the practice of organizational and human resource development. Future studies should also delve more deeply into the paradox of present and absent leadership as enabling factors in other kinds of innovative organizational processes.

Another comparative angle that should be pursued is the cultural embeddedness of innovative processes like artistic interventions, particularly when considering questions relating to leadership. Although studies have been conducted in many countries, no attention has yet been paid to the influence of the national, regional, or ethnic context on what is considered possible, desirable, or effective in artistic interventions, nor the implications for different styles and constellations of leadership. Real-time observations of cases in different sociocultural contexts would significantly enhance the insights generated by survey research on top management leadership and influence on innovation (Elenkov & Manev, 2005).

An additional objective of such comparative studies would be to contribute empirically grounded insights to the aesthetic turn in leadership discourse (Adler, 2011; Bathurst, Jackson, & Statler, 2010; Biehl-Missal, 2010; Guillet de Monthoux, Gustafsson, & Sjostrand, 2007; Hansen, Ropo, & Sauer, 2007; Ladkin, 2008). Indeed, one of the key differences between artistic interventions and mainstream interventions is that the arts entail aesthetic engagement. Aesthetic practices are not grounded in the abstract knowledge that mainstream management approaches advocate, and they do not treat sense-making as a purely cognitive process; instead, they emphasize tapping into embodied knowing and intuition by including "bodily sensations, felt experiences, emotions and sensory knowing" as "an *integral* part of sensemaking" (Cunliffe & Coupland, 2011, p. 64, emphasis in original; see also Hansen et al., 2007). Zambrell's (2016) interviews with Swedish managers who initiated artistic interventions in their organizations led her to characterize their leadership as "aesthetic-inspired" (p. 191). Interviews with managers who have been responsible for artistic interventions reveal that they often use aesthetic forms of knowing to assess the effects of these processes in their organizations. They talk about noticing how their employees stand taller, look at them in the eye, or are "no longer shadows" after engaging in an artistic intervention (Berthoin Antal, 2013b).

One of the new themes in the aesthetic turn in leadership discourse is aspirationally—and provocatively—labeled "leading beautifully" because Adler (2011) argues that "now is the time to invoke beauty" in leadership to find "solutions worthy of our humanity" (p. 209). Might leaders who undertake artistic interventions be more likely than others to lead beautifully? Might artistic interventions be more likely than other approaches to open spaces in organizations for the development of products, processes, and services that are worthy of our humanity? Other scholars in this area explicitly resist equating aesthetics with beauty, and use the term to address the whole range of sensory knowledge. They draw on aesthetics to bring to the fore "meanings we construct based on feelings about what we experience via our senses, as opposed to the meanings we can deduce in the absence of experience" (Hansen et al., 2007, p. 545). They point out that studying aesthetic leadership has ontological and epistemological implications, requiring "getting at the experiential and contextual, and inquiry into leaders[’] and followers[’] sensory and felt meanings constructed in subjective processes that rely on aesthetic knowledge" (Hansen et al., 2007, p. 552).

Future research will be enriched by breaking the mold of methods in leadership and organization studies, namely, by engaging in artistic practices, as scholars like Adler (2015) have shown. Believing that "[a]rt does not dismiss science but, rather, partners with all ways of knowing to go beyond what any one approach can produce on its own" (Adler, 2015, p. 481), she draws on her experience with watercolor painting to advance her understanding of leadership challenges, and puts these insights into practice in management seminars. In a similar vein, Taylor (2013) has shown how generative it can be to engage in inquiry as playwright and management scholar.

Yet another research direction for future research would be to study how to "enable organizations to explore the connections and interconnections they have with society by broadening the view of leadership where responsibility is moved from the few to the many" (Edwards, 2011, p. 309). We suggest that artistic interventions may help integrate people from different communities beyond the organization and thereby build closer connections between the organization and society. Future studies could clarify the conditions under which constellations of distributed leadership that include people and organizations in the local community enhance or impede the realization of individual- and collective-level benefits.

Managerial Implications

At the outset of this article, we highlighted that scholars have already been encouraging top managers to initiate artistic interventions. A reviewer of this article suggested that CEOs could build on the experience with temporary artistic

interventions and create permanent positions for artists in residence to ensure ongoing stimulation in the organization. From our interviews with artists, curators, and managers, we have learned that the credibility of artists both in the artworld and in the business world depends greatly on them maintaining their roots in the artworld. Their value to the business world lies in their outsider status and perspective from which they can pose fresh questions and challenges. An organization seeking long-term learning with the artworld could establish a residency program with a series of different artists to work *in situ*, and invite top managers, employees at all levels, as well as external stakeholders to engage in co-learning.

The findings of this study provide suggestions as to what top managers need to attend to beyond that first step to increase the likelihood that the experience will be valuable at the individual and collective level. The underlying message is that by engaging with artists, CEOs can learn to take the risk of deviating from a logic that favors rationality, efficiency, and control, and instead try embracing not-knowing (Berthoin Antal, 2013a). Deviating from the dominant, management-infused logic is not an easy thing to do: It brings leaders into a tenuous position because they ask their employees to follow them on a path whose precise destination is by definition unknown. Deciding to take such an open approach is the first challenge; the next is to maintain the openness, which is even more difficult because it extends the period during which leaders are vulnerable and subject to criticism. Complexity leadership theory suggests that leaders actually have no choice but to take up these challenges, given the fluid and ambiguous environment that organizations are currently operating in (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Making the shift out of the comfort zone of knowing to not knowing is not easy, but studies have documented that artistic interventions can be particularly generative of such learning for leaders at all levels of the organization (Eriksson, 2009).

Given that organizations are suffused with power, it is essential in practice and in research to recognize that leaders at all levels are entangled in power relations that they can choose to address consciously and at least temporarily suspend to permit people to feel safe when expressing unorthodox views. The intersection between artistic interventions in organizations and leadership studies, therefore, provides a rich opportunity to experiment with and reflect on the co-creative character of making space for learning with the arts and making space for alternative forms of leadership.

In closing, we suggest that top managers could take our observations on the two tensions that they face when they open their organizations to learning with the arts as a point of departure: the tension between presence and absence, and the tension between providing orientation and being open to learning. Our analysis suggests that top managers can resolve the tensions by both generating and suspending their leadership. In this spirit, by temporarily suspending their drive for action, they can also experience personal transformation, which in turn can nourish their capacity to provide new orientation. Such a conception of leadership is not necessarily limited to situations involving artistic interventions, especially given the need for learning leaders at all levels of the organization (Sadler, 2001). In line with ideas suggested by Peters (1992), Mackey and Sisodia (2013), and Laloux (2014), such an approach could inspire top managers who seek to liberate themselves and others from the strictures of traditional hierarchical structures without causing the chaos that results from lack of orientation.

Authors' Note

The authors are listed alphabetically.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Richard Stackman and the anonymous JMI reviewers, Anke Strauß, anonymous reviewers from the Academy of Management 2016, and participants in the Arts, Design and Organization stream at the EGOS 2014 annual conference for their comments on earlier versions of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Notes

1. In line with the emerging body of socioeconomic literature on valuation (e.g., Stark, 2009) that is reclaiming the concept of "values" from economics, in this article, we consciously use the term *values-added* to alert the reader to the wider range of potential benefits that artistic interventions can add to the organization beyond the mainstream economic notion of value-added (Berthoin Antal, 2013b).
2. A perennial discussion in the literature is about the difference between leadership and management. Leadership tends to be considered as "going beyond" management (Bass, 1985), and entails developing and sharing a vision, a purpose, and values to motivate and inspire (Kotter, 2001) while management is generally associated with operational matters and problem solving (Tengblad, 2012; Zambrell, 2016). Like Tengblad and Alvesson (2013), who assert that "it seldom makes sense to divide people into leaders and managers" (p. 172), we do not observe a strict line of demarcation in practice, where we find that leadership for innovative processes like artistic interventions can also be exercised by managers (and nonmanagers) throughout the organization.

References

Adler, N. J. (2006). The arts and leadership: Now that we can do anything, what will we do? *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *5*, 466-499.

Adler, N. J. (2011). Leading beautifully: The creative economy and beyond. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *20*, 208-221.

Adler, N. J. (2015). Finding beauty in a fractured world: Art inspires leaders—Leaders change the world. *Academy of Management Review*, *40*, 480-494.

Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2016). Intellectual failure and ideological success in organization studies: The case of transformational leadership. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *25*, 139-152.

Andersen, J. A. (2016). Leadership scholarship: All bridges have been burned. *Leadership and the Humanities*, *4*, 108-125.

Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*, 315-338.

Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Walumbwa, F. O., Luthans, F., & May, D. R. (2004). Unlocking the mask: A look at the process by which authentic leaders impact follower attitudes and behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *15*, 801-823.

Barry, D. (2008). The art of . . . . In D. Barry & H. Hansen (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of new approaches in management* (pp. 31-41). London, England: Sage.

Barry, D., & Meisiek, S. (2010). Seeing more and differently: Sensemaking, mindfulness, and the workarts. *Organization Studies*, *31*, 1505-1530.

Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectation*. New York, NY: The Free Press.

Bass, B., & Bass, R. (2008). *The Bass handbook of leadership—Theory, research and managerial applications* (4th ed.). New York, NY: The Free Press.

Bathurst, R., Jackson, B., & Statler, M. (2010). Leading aesthetically in uncertain times. *Leadership*, *6*, 311-330.

Berthoin Antal, A. (1992). *Corporate social performance: Rediscovering actors in their organizational contexts*. Frankfurt am Main, Germany: Campus Verlag.

Berthoin Antal, A. (2009). *Research framework for evaluating the effects of artistic interventions in organizations* (Research report). Gothenburg, Sweden: TILLT Europe. Retrieved from http://www.wzb.eu/sites/default/files/u30/researchreport.pdf

Berthoin Antal, A. (2013a). Art-based research for engaging not-knowing in organizations. *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*, *4*, 67-76.

Berthoin Antal, A. (2013b). Seeking values: Artistic interventions in organizations as potential cultural sources of values-added. In D. Baecker & B. P. Priddat (Eds.), *Oekonomie der Werte* [Economics of values] (pp. 97-128). Marburg, Germany: Metropolis-Verlag.

Berthoin Antal, A. (2016). The studio in the firm: A study of four artistic intervention residencies. In I. Farías & A. Wilkie (Eds.), *Studio studies: Operations, sites, displacements* (pp. 171-186). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Berthoin Antal, A., & Nussbaum Bitram, I. (2015). *Artistic interventions in organizations: Data reports from multi-stakeholder surveys in Spain 2011-2014* (Discussion Paper SPIII2015-603). Berlin, Germany: Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung.

Berthoin Antal, A., & Strauß, A. (2014). Not only art's task—Narrating bridges between unusual experiences with art and organizational identity. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *30*, 114-123.

Berthoin Antal, A., & Strauß, A. (2016). Multistakeholder perspectives on searching for evidence of values-added in artistic interventions in organizations. In U. Johansson Sköldberg, J. Woodilla, & A. Berthoin Antal (Eds.), *Artistic interventions in organizations: Research, theory and practice* (pp. 37-60). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Bessière, J. (2013). *Transformer l'organisation avec l'art. Etude rétrospective pour évaluer l'impact résiduel dans le temps des démarches artistiques sur l'organisation. Le cas d'Eurogroup Consulting* [Transforming the organization with art. Retrospective study to evaluate the residual impact of artistic interventions in an organization. The case of Eurogroup Consulting] (Unpublished master's thesis). Université Paris Dauphine, France.

Biehl-Missal, B. (2010). Hero takes a fall: A lesson from theatre for leadership. *Leadership*, *6*, 279-294.

Blom, M., & Alvesson, M. (2014). Leadership on demand: Followers as initiators and inhibitors of managerial leadership. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *30*, 344-357.

Bolden, R. (2011). Distributed leadership in organizations: A review of theory and research. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *13*, 251-269.

Brattström, V. (2016). Playing the "Magic If": A theatre director's perspective on intervening. In U. Johansson Sköldberg, J. Woodilla, & A. Berthoin Antal (Eds.), *Artistic interventions in organizations: Research, theory and practice* (pp. 164-182). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Brellochs, M., & Schrat, H. (2005). *Produkt und vision reader*. Berlin, Germany: Kadmos.

Chodzinski, A. (2007). *Kunst und Wirtschaft. Peter Behrens, Emil Rathenau und der dm-drogerie markt* [Art and business. Peter Behrens, Emil Rathenau and dm-drogerie markt]. Berlin, Germany: Kadmos.

Clark, T., & Mangham, I. (2004). Stripping to the undercoat: A review and reflections on a piece of organization theatre. *Organization Studies*, *25*, 5841-5851.

Cunliffe, A., & Coupland, C. (2011). From hero to villain to hero: Making experience sensible through embodied narrative sensemaking. *Human Relations*, *65*, 63-88.

Darsø, L. (2004). *Artful creation: Learning-tales of arts-in-business*. Frederiksberg, Denmark: Samfundslitteratur.

Darsø, L. (2016). Arts-in-business from 2004 to 2014: From experiments in practice to research and leadership development. In U. Johansson Sköldberg, J. Woodilla, & A. Berthoin Antal (Eds.), *Artistic interventions in organizations: Research, theory and practice* (pp. 18-34). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Dinh, J. E., Lord, R. G., Gardner, W. L., Meuser, J. D., Liden, R. C., & Hu, J. (2014). Leadership theory and research in the new millennium: Current theoretical trends and changing perspectives. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *25*, 36-62.

Eagly, A. H. (2005). Achieving relational authenticity in leadership: Does gender matter? *The Leadership Quarterly*, *16*, 459-474.

Edwards, G. (2011). Concepts of community: A framework for contextualizing distributed leadership. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *13*, 301-312.

Elenkov, D. S., & Manev, I. M. (2005). Top management leadership and influence on innovation: The role of sociocultural context. *Journal of Management*, *31*, 381-402.

Eriksson, M. (2009). *Expanding your comfort zone—The effects of artistic and cultural intervention on the workplace* (A study of AIRIS 2005-2008, Including Genklang Vara 2006-2008). Gothenburg, Sweden: Institute for Management of Innovation and Technology.

Fitzsimons, D., Turnbull, J. K., & Denyer, D. (2011). Alternative approaches for studying shared and distributed leadership. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *13*, 313-328.

Fletcher, J. K., & Käufer, K. (2003). Shared leadership: Paradox and possibility. In C. L. Pearce & J. A. Conger (Eds.), *Shared leadership: Reframing the hows and whys of leadership* (pp. 21-47). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fry, L. W. (2003). Toward a theory of spiritual leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *14*, 693-727.

Gibb, C. A. (1954). Leadership. In G. Lindzey (Ed.), *Handbook of social psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 877-917). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Guillet de Monthoux, P., Gustafsson, C., & Sjostrand, S.-E. (Eds.). (2007). *Aesthetic leadership: Managing fields of flow in art and business*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hackett, R. D., & Wang, G. (2012). Virtues and leadership: An integrating conceptual framework founded in Aristotelian and Confucian perspectives on virtues. *Management Decision*, *50*, 868-899.

Hansen, H., Ropo, A., & Sauer, E. (2007). Aesthetic leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *18*, 544-560.

Harris, A., & Spillane, J. (2008). Distributed leadership through the looking glass. *Management in Education*, *22*(1), 31-34.

Hunt, J. G., Boal, K. B., & Sorenson, R. K. (1990). Top management leadership: Inside the black box. *Leadership Quarterly*, *1*, 41-65.

Ibbotson, P. (2008). *The illusion of leadership: Directing creativity in business and the arts*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Imran, M. K., Ilyas, M., & Aslam, U. (2016). Organizational learning through transformational leadership. *Learning Organization*, *23*, 232-248.

Jahnke, M. (2016). A newspaper changes its identity through an artistic intervention. In U. Johansson Sköldberg, J. Woodilla, & A. Berthoin Antal (Eds.), *Artistic interventions in organizations: Research, theory and practice* (pp. 77-89). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Katz-Buonincontro, J. (2008). Using the arts to promote creativity in leaders. *Journal of Research on Leadership Education*, *3*, 1-27.

Klar, H. W., Huggins, K. S., Hammons, H. L., & Buskey, F. C. (2016). Fostering the capacity for distributed leadership: A post heroic approach to leading school improvement. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *19*, 111-137.

Kotter, J. P. (2001). What leaders really do. *Harvard Business Review*, *79*(11), 85-98.

Ladkin, D. (2008). Leading beautifully: How mastery, congruence and purpose create the aesthetic of embodied leadership practice. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *19*, 31-41.

Ladkin, D. (2010). *Rethinking leadership: A new look at old leadership questions*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Laloux, F. (2014). *Reinventing organizations: A guide to creating organizations inspired by the next stage of human consciousness*. Brussels, Belgium: Nelson Parker.

Li, V., Mitchell, R., & Boyle, B. (2016). The divergent effects of transformational leadership on individual and team innovation. *Group & Organization Management*, *41*, 66-97.

Ling, T. (2012). Evaluating complex and unfolding interventions in real time. *Evaluation*, *18*, 79-91.

Mackey, J., & Sisodia, R. (2013). *Liberating the heroic spirit of business: Conscious capitalism*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Mangham, I. (2001). Afterword: Looking for Henry. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *14*, 295-304.

Mayer, D. M., Aquino, K., Greenbaum, R. L., & Kuenzi, M. (2012). Who displays ethical leadership and why does it matter? An examination of antecedents and consequences of ethical leadership. *Academy of Management Journal*, *55*, 151-171.

Mehra, A., Smith, B., Dixon, A. L., & Robertson, B. (2006). Distributed leadership in teams: The network of leadership perceptions and team performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *17*, 232-245.

Mintzberg, H. (2010). Developing leaders? Developing countries. *Oxford Leadership Journal*, *11*(2). Retrieved from http://www.mintzberg.org/sites/default/files/article/download/mintzberg.pdf

Mokhber, M., Wan Ismail, W. K., & Vakilbashi, A. (2015). Effect of transformational leadership and its components on organizational innovation. *Iranian Journal of Management Studies*, *8*, 221-241.

Parris, D. L., & Peachey, J. (2013). A systematic literature review of servant leadership theory in organizational contexts. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *113*, 377-393.

Pässilä, A., & Oikarinen, T. (2014). Research-based theater as a facilitator of organizational learning. In A. Berthoin Antal, P. Meusburger, & L. Suarsana (Eds.), *Learning organizations: Extending the field* (pp. 203-221). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Pearce, C. L., & Sims, H. P. (2002). Vertical versus shared leadership as predictors of the effectiveness of change management teams: An examination of aversive, directive, transactional, transformational and empowering leader behaviors. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, *6*, 172-197.

Peters, T. (1992). *Liberation management, necessary disorganization for the nanosecond nineties*. New York, NY: Knopf.

Przeworski, A., & Teune, H. (1970). *The logic of comparative inquiry*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Rae, J. E. (2011). *A study of the use of organisational theatre: The case of forum theatre* (Unpublished master's thesis). Durham University, UK.

Raviola, E., & Schnugg, C. (2016). Fostering creativity through artistic interventions: Two stories of failed attempts to commodify creativity. In U. Johansson Sköldberg, J. Woodilla, & A. Berthoin Antal (Eds.), *Artistic interventions in organizations: Research, theory and practice* (pp. 90-106). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Robinson, S., & Dix, A. (2007). *EVOLVE: The evaluation*. London, England: The MAP Consortium, Creative Partnerships Thames Gateway, Arts Council England East.

Sadler, P. (2001). Leadership and organizational learning. In M. Dierkes, A. Berthoin Antal, J. Child, & I. Nonaka (Eds.),

Handbook of organizational learning and knowledge (pp. 415-427). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Schiuma, G. (2011). *The value of arts for business*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Stark, D. (2009). *The sense of dissonance: Accounts of worth in economic life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Strauß, A. (2012). *Researchers, models and dancing witches: Tracing dialogue between art and business* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Essex, UK.

Styhre, A., & Fröberg, J. (2016). Artistic interventions in organizations as Détournement and constructed situations. In U. Johansson Sköldberg, J. Woodilla, & A. Berthoin Antal (Eds.), *Artistic interventions in organizations: Research, theory and practice* (pp. 107-120). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.

Taylor, S. S. (2013). Little beauties: Aesthetics, craft skill, and the experience of beautiful action. *Journal of Management Inquiry*, *22*, 69-81.

Tengblad, S. (Ed.). (2012). *The work of managers*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Tengblad, S., & Alvesson, M. (2013). Leadership. In L. Stannegard & A. Styhre (Eds.), *Management: An advanced introduction* (pp. 157-180). Lund, Sweden: Studentlitteratur.

Uhl-Bien, M. (2006). Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *17*, 654-676.

Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., & McKelvey, B. (2007). Complexity leadership theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *18*, 298-318.

Weller, S. (2009). *Kunst als Entwicklungskonzept im New Management: Das Beispiel dm-drogerie markt* [Art as a development approach in new management: The case of dm-drogerie markt] (Unpublished master's thesis). Free University of Berlin, Germany.

Zambrell, K. (2016). Managers in artistic interventions and their leadership approach. In U. Johansson Sköldberg, J. Woodilla, & A. Berthoin Antal (Eds.), *Artistic interventions in organizations: Research, theory and practice* (pp. 185-203). Abingdon, UK: Routledge.